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Weekly Research Update

An examination of rebuilding efforts along the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita with an emphasis on displaced populations, inadequacy of government responses, and inequitable development strategies.

Weekly Update ~ November 10, 2006

Reports:

- Officials of the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP) are encouraging all N.O. residents to call the LA Rebuilds/UNOP toll free (877-527-3284) to share their ideas and voice their opinions on the rebuilding process, particularly those residents that are unable to attend the community meetings that are being held (to meetings to come are scheduled for December 2, 2006 and January 13, 2007). Over the phone, residents will be surveyed and have the opportunity to address issues such as the availability of affordable housing, accessibility to medical services and quality of public schools. The information gathered at meetings and over the phone will be compiled and integrated into a comprehensive report that is scheduled for completion in January 2007.
Source: Louisiana Recovery Authority Press Release. "Unified New Orleans Plan Officials Urge Residents to Voice Opinions." *LRA*. November 3, 2006.
<http://www.lra.louisiana.gov/pr110306unop.html>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is keeping a report which analyzed the performance and response of the agency to Hurricane Katrina. According to CDC officials the agency's response to Katrina while "not perfect" was one of "its shining moments". The CDC has identified problem areas and assures that this has facilitated the development of better plans, communication and training. The CDC's report has led to a "corrective action plan." The CDC claims it has implemented 80 to 90% of the identified areas of improvement.
Source: Young, Alison. "CDC's Katrina critique is secret." *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. November 7, 2006.
<http://www.ajc.com/news/content/news/stories/2006/11/07/1107cdckatrina.html>

Government response:

- Gov. Kathleen Blanco has requested that the Road Home program approve rebuilding funding for 10,000 applicant families by the end of November. Given this timeline it would be an incredible feat as less than 1,400 applications have been approved since July 2006. The Louisiana Recovery Authority requested on November 6 that the Small Business Administration stop

demanding homeowners or small businesses to pay off their loans with other forms of federal storm relief.

Source: Nolan, Bruce. "Blanco tries to light fire under Road Home plan; Thousands of families waiting for applications to be processed." *Times-Picayune*. November 7, 2006.

<http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/frontpage/index.ssf?/base/news-7/1162885882233420.xml&coll=1>

- The CDC credits its response to Hurricane Katrina to helping the agency prepare for emergency public health response in particular to a potential influenza pandemic. During the Katrina disaster the CDC deployed almost 700 CDC experts to respond to the emergency. In so doing the CDC helped with health issues such as infectious disease detection, prevention, and outbreak control in shelters and affected communities, injury prevention for displaced people and rescue workers, environmental health and safety monitoring, rebuilding public infrastructure, school health, worker and responder safety recommendations and monitoring. Post-Katrina, the CDC assessed its response and found areas in need of improvement. Corrective actions have since been taken from the lessons learned from Katrina. Additionally, the CDC has been working with FEMA and with states to coordinate the Emergency Mutual Aid Compact for inter-state relief activities in the event of an emergency.

Source: "CDC Learns from Katrina, Plans for Pandemic. Lessons from storm benefit preparation for deadly global virus." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. November 7, 2006.

http://www.cdc.gov/about/news/2006_11/katrina.htm

- The state of Louisiana launched a website, LAHousingSearch.org on November 3rd to help people find affordable rental property. This service is sponsored by the La. Governor's Office, the La. Housing Finance Agency, La. Department of Health and Hospitals and the La. Recovery Authority. Rental property owners are able to advertise their properties at no cost. The website is intended to provide a short-term solution to the affordable housing crunch. To address the long-term housing issues, the state is launching a plan to rebuild over 35,000 units of affordable rental housing to be funded by Community Development Block Grant money and scheduled to begin in early 2007.

Source: "Property Owners Encouraged to List Available Housing. LAHousingSearch.org will link renters, affordable housing." *Office of the Governor, Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, State of Louisiana*. November 3, 2006.

<http://www.gov.state.la.us/index.cfm?md=newsroom&tmp=detail&articleID=2336>

Recovery:

- Many people left New Orleans in the fall of 2005 not anticipating being gone more than five days. Those five days have turned into 14 months and counting for many residents now living in emergency housing. At the height of use 75,000 FEMA trailers were occupied in Louisiana. To date, this number has only been minimally reduced with 70,000 residents still living in trailers throughout the state. Many people are finding it difficult to move out of the trailers because moving requires money they simply don't have. Some residents question why it is that contractors, who then subcontract out work, keep getting checks from FEMA when their assistance is running out. Others wonder why it is that FEMA invests so many resources, approximately \$45,000, in each trailer instead of offering comparable funds for residents to purchase permanent housing. These questions often remain unanswered while evacuees continue to wait for a way home.

Source: Davis, Sandy. "Travel trailer cabin fever: Life in trailers a challenge for evacuees." *The Advocate*. November 6, 2006.

- The new Gulf Coast Renaissance Corporation, a coast-wide housing organization was created by the Gulf Coast Business Council in order to meet the great need for workforce housing in coastal counties. The mission of the newly formed Renaissance Corporation is to acquire seed money so as to quickly build affordable housing.

Source: Coleman, Leigh. "Group to push housing: New corporation hopes to remove construction hurdles." *The Sun Herald*. November 4, 2006. http://www.sunherald.com/mld/thesunherald/news/special_packages/renewal/long_beach/15927456.htm
- Although it has been over 14 months since Hurricane Katrina, volunteers from various services and religious organizations remain in the New Orleans area to assist in the rebuilding efforts. To date groups from AmeriCorps, Habitat for Humanity, Samaritan's Purse and numerous churches from across the U.S. have gutted around 3,000 homes in St. Bernard Parish assisting people in returning to their homes.

Source: Bazile, Karen Turni. "No Slowing Down; Volunteers still working to get families back in their homes nearly 14 months after Katrina." *Times-Picayune*. November 6, 2006. <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/metro/index.ssf?/base/news-18/1162795040241020.xml&coll=1>
- The Katrina Cottage is now joined by the Katrina Kernel Cottage, another type of factory built home. This new cottage was developed by New Urbanist architect, Steve Mouzon. Similarly to the original Katrina Cottage, the new model is intended to alleviate the housing crisis in the Gulf Coast. According to the manufacturer of the Kernel Cottage, the steel-framed houses have no squeaks, termites or other pests, can withstand fire, the weight of snow on the roof, hurricane-force winds and earthquakes.

Source: Hales, Linda. "Katrina's Cottage Industry; Storm Spawns a Second, Factory-Built Dwelling." *The Washington Post*. November 4, 2003. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/03/AR2006110301620.html>
- According to building and utility experts, Hurricane Katrina offered the opportunity to use energy-efficient building techniques, materials and appliances in rebuilding or renovating over 200,000 flooded and damaged homes in the New Orleans area. The rationale for using "green" techniques and materials is that it will reduce energy use and cut energy costs. However, local consumers are not accustomed to sustainable or green building and so a campaign is necessary to have green building enter the consciousness in Louisiana. The Alliance for Affordable Energy and Global Green, among other organizations, are trying to attract "green" vendors and businesses to the area, as well as educate the public about sustainable options. However, when faced with the extra cost of rebuilding "green," consumers may be enticed to select a cheaper alternative.

Source: Russell, Pam Radtke. "Green House Effect; Hurricane Katrina may be the perfect opportunity to rebuild New Orleans as a model of energy efficiency." *Times-Picayune*. November 5, 2006. <http://www.nola.com/business/t-p/index.ssf?/base/money-1/1162709952227150.xml&coll=1>
- Rhetoric about regionalism has infiltrated the New Orleans area and is starting to bring about policy changes. The New Orleans and Jefferson Parish councils met November 1st to discuss issues that cross parish boundaries and the importance of acting as a region to address issues such as flood protection, crime, and the rising cost of insurance. On the issue of public transit,

city and suburbs have been divided despite the inconvenience of a fractured system. A merger between Jefferson and New Orleans transit is unlikely to occur immediately as divides persists despite post-Katrina regional aspirations.

Source: Moran, Kate. "Public transit on agenda at joint N.O., Jeff session; N.O., Jeff councils to try to end longtime roadblock." *Times-Picayune*. November 5, 2006. <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/metro/index.ssf?/base/news-18/1162708071227150.xml&coll=1>

- Mayor Nagin told residents at a community forum on November 4th "we are now completely open with the footprint of the city of New Orleans". The mayor has highlighted the fact that water, sewage and electrical services are functioning in inhabited neighborhoods across the city. He also predicts that the population will reach 300,000 by the end of 2006. However, critics argue that recovery has been too slow and that a number of issues remain unaddressed including the rise in crime, lack of hospitals and good schools, the decaying public recreation infrastructure, and the Mayor's failure to provide a plan for the city.

Source: Simmons, Ann M. "New Orleans mayor accentuates the positive. Critics, though, say long-term ills of the city are festering." *Los Angeles Times*. November 8, 2006.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/politics/la-na-nagin8nov08,1,1185755.story?coll=la-news-politics-national&track=crosspromo>

Katrina and Race:

- Julian Bond, a University of Virginia history professor and chairman of the NAACP gave a keynote speech at a U.Va. symposium on the racial implications of Hurricane Katrina and called the Bush administration's response a "gumbo of inaction, insensitivity and incompetence." The goal of the conference was to bring scholars and analysts together to figure out what went wrong and why.

Source: Santos, Carlos. "Forum explores Katrina and race; Julian Bond tells gathering at U.Va. the storm revealed disparities, social inequality." *Richmond Times Dispatch*. November 3, 2006.

http://www.timesdispatch.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=RTD%2FMGArticle%2FRTD_BasicArticle&%09s=1045855935264&c=MGArticle&cid=1149191488856&path=!news!politics

- In order to remove potential barriers faced by racial minority voters and displaced voters, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF) in conjunction with national and local partners led statewide public education and Election Day monitoring efforts in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi. According to LDF President Theodore Shaw "LDF is committed to ensuring that African-American voters throughout the Gulf are able to freely cast their votes this election season... We recognize that the recent hurricanes have presented a series additional challenges for communities throughout the Gulf... LDF will work hard to ensure that no barriers stands in between voters and ballot box."

Source: Shaw, Kay. "NAACP Legal Defense Fund Targets Gulf States For 2006 Elections."

BlackNews.com. November 7, 2006. <http://www.blacknews.com/pr/naacpldf301.html>